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itself affords, seems to show the untenability of the hypothesis which assumes a fictitious connection with the families of Atharvan and Angiras, and with the Brahma, to have been asserted for these hymns with the conscious intention of gaining dignity and importance for them; and I suspect," he adds, "the word *brahma* in Brahma-veda, to be used in an entirely different sense, namely, something like 'spell, incantation,' which would make this name to a certain extent fairly descriptive of the collection."

E. E. S.

XI. MELEK TÂUS OF THE YEZIDÏS.

Melek Tâus is a term which the YezidÏs apply to Satan and to the figure of a bird.

There are three explanations of this term; viz. that of Dr. Thomas Hyde, 'Angel Peacock,' see *Vet. Pers. Relig. Hist.* p. 518, that of Rev. H. A. Homes, late Missionary of American Board, 'King Peacock,' see *Bibl. Repos.* Apr. 1842, p. 340, and that of Rev. Dr. Justin Perkins, Missionary of American Board, 'Mighty Angel,' see *Miss. Her.*, Feb. 1838, p. 53.

Some approximation, however, may be made towards a correct explanation. *Tâus* clearly denotes 'peacock.' See Garzoni: *Grammatica e Vocabulario della Lingua Kurda*, p. 206. We have also the testimony of Fr. Forbes, that the bronze figure of a bird is a peacock, see *Journ. R. G. S. of Lond.*, 1839. But it is uncertain from Garzoni, whether *Melek* denotes 'a king,' as explained by Homes, (comp. Kurd. *memmleket*, 'a kingdom;') or 'an angel,' as explained by Hyde, (comp. Kurd. *melaiket*, 'an angel.') In neither case should Mr. Layard in the same line have rendered *Melek* in reference to this subject both 'king,' (comp. Hebr. *melek*, 'king;') and 'angel,' (comp. Hebr. *malâk*, 'angel.') See Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. I. p. 245.

Since writing the above, additional information has been received from Mr. Layard himself, and from Rev. H. Lobdell, Missionary of American Board.

Mr. Layard, in the autumn of 1849, at Redwan, a town of the YezidÏs, obtained a sight of this mysterious figure. He describes it thus: "A stand of bright copper or brass, in shape like the candlesticks generally used in Mosul and Baghdad, was surmounted by the rude image of a bird in the same metal, and more like an Indian or Mexican idol than a cock or peacock. Its peculiar workmanship indicated some antiquity, but I could see no traces of inscription upon it. . . . It is not looked upon as an idol, but as a symbol or banner,

as Sheikh Nasr termed it, of the house of Hussein Bey." See Layard's *Babylon and Nineveh*, New York, 1853, p. 48, where he gives an engraving of this object. He does not explain *Melek*, but appears to use *Melek Isa* for 'King Jesus,' on p. 83.

Mr. Lobdell, in October, 1852, visited Sheikh Adi, on occasion of the annual festival of the Yezidis at that place. He says, there was "music and dancing, every night during the festival, before *Melek Taoos*, King Peacock, or the Devil's image, as one of the Sheikhs privately informed me." One of the chief priests accounted to him for the Devil's being called *Melek Tâus* as follows :

"When Christ was on the cross, in the absence of his friends, the Devil in the fashion of a dervish took him down, and carried him to heaven. The Marys soon came, and, seeing that their Lord was not there, inquired of the dervish where he was. They would not believe his answer ; but they promised to do so, if he would take the pieces of a cooked chicken from which he was eating, and bring the animal to life. He assented to the proposal ; and, bringing back bone to his bone, the cock crew ! The dervish then announced his real character, and they expressed their astonishment by a burst of adoration. Having informed them that he would thenceforth always appear to his beloved in the shape of a beautiful bird, he departed.' The peacock (taoos) was chosen as their chieftain's symbol ; and the deity, if not the sun, was forced to give way in the Sabean system to the prince of hell."

We give this myth as being the explanation of the Yezidis themselves. The grammatical interpretation of *Melek Tâus*, 'King Peacock,' we may now consider as established.

J. W. G.